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ABSTRACT

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 gives states the opportunity to devise unique welfare programs that include client participation in educational activities. States receive block grants rather than funds earmarked for certain kinds of programs. Pennsylvania's welfare reform plan permits welfare clients to participate in educational activities after their work requirement hours are fulfilled and to establish "Individual Development Accounts" to save money for educational activities at approved institutions. The plan allows welfare-to-work program providers to provide 4 weeks of remedial education. Clients may participate in educational activities based on the Welfare Department's very flexible guidelines and the caseworker's opinion. Northampton Community College's Adult Literacy program shows specific effects of Pennsylvania's reform plan. After a mandated 8-week job search program, students participate in such programs as English as a second language, adult basic education, general equivalency diploma, welfare to work, single point of contact, and short-term training programs. The college offers 20-week classes and welfare-to-work programs funded through a collaborative effort between the Welfare Department and labor and industry. These programs integrate basic education skills and world-of-work components. New funding sources have been located. Collaboration is seen as the major factor that distinguishes successful and thriving providers of adult education services. (YLB)

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The Influence of Federal and State Welfare Reform on Adult Education

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ABSTRACT:
This article presents issues that are relevant to adult education providers (eg esl, abe, ged, higher education, training and development, etc.) who have welfare clients, as students, receiving adult education services. Federal welfare reform (HR 3734) gives states the opportunity to devise unique welfare programs. States will receive blockgrants, rather than receiving funding earmarked for certain kinds of programs. In order to provide some framework with which to look at welfare reform, this article uses Pennsylvania's reform plan, and Northampton Community College's Adult Literacy program to look at specific effects. Topics to be covered include: collaborative efforts, funding, program design and delivery, curriculum, and personnel.

Introduction:

When congress passed welfare reform legislation it allowed the states to individualize their plans. States had until July 1, 1997 to implement a their welfare reform plan. Some states, like Pennsylvania that implemented its plan on March 1, 1997, took advantage of an earlier starting date. However, welfare reform, even for those who started early is still in its infancy.

A recent survey of state Adult Education Directors indicated that only a very small percentage had a role in helping to prepare their state's welfare reform plan

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(Vocational training news, 5/22/97, p.8). While some states have seen the very real need to link education and welfare reform, most states have tended to ignore this need for collaboration.

Adult education programs across the country will feel the effects of federal welfare reform, in terms of available funds and students. Adult education programs that do not have any students who receive public assistance (cash, daycare, transportation, foodstamps, medical, etc) will also be effected by welfare reform. All adult education providers will be effected in terms of available funding and the finite pool of students. Adult education providers that are willing to enter into cooperative efforts with other providers and are flexible in their program development will have an advantage when adult education funds are dispersed, and when funds from other sources become available. Adult education providers should be aware of welfare reform, at the federal and state levels, in order to plan for change proactively. The influence of welfare reform on delivery of adult education services will vary from state to state, because the federal law permits each state to submit its own plan. However, there is some common ground that will be found in all state plans of welfare reform. Federal law eliminates Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC), in favor of a blockgrant formula. The blockgrant eliminates funding for specific activities (such as education and training) and puts all state money into one pool of funds. The blockgrant

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allocation must provide all services (eg; daycare, cash assistance, education and training) to welfare clients.

Our students, who receive public assistance, have been able to count on welfare for financial help, as well as help with supportive services, such as daycare, transportation, food stamps, and medical assistance. Providers of adult education have been able to count on welfare to provide a steady stream of clients into existing programs. It is important for adult educators to remember that many of the barriers to participation (Darkenwald and Merriam, 1982), for adult students, are situation and social service related, rather than barriers related to educational ability. Welfare reform will, in many cases, make it more difficult for adults to participate in adult education programs. It will be imperative that providers develop new program models, in order for students to overcome these institutional barriers, and for providers to look attractive to potential funding sources.

This article will cover the following areas: Federal reform and state reform concerned with education, current welfare practices involving clients and educational services, suggestions based on Northampton Community College Adult Literacy Department's experience, and conclusions.

Welfare Reform:

The federal law, officially known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (HR3734), has

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specific portions that address welfare client participation in educational activities. These portions say:

1. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding will be given to states in blockgrants, rather than individually earmarked funds. Aid for Dependent Children (AFDC) is eliminated
2. Only heads of households who are teens will have educational activities count toward meeting their required number of work-related hours in order to continue receiving welfare.
3. Welfare blockgrant levels will be based on client participation in work-related activities (twenty hours per week in single parent households, and 30 hours per week in two parent households). No more than 20 percent of a state's welfare population will be allowed to participate in vocational training activities. Only ten hours of the thirty hour activity may be education-related.
4. Allowable work-related activities, that are education-related include: a)vocational training), b)job-skill training related to employment, c)education that is directly related to getting employment in the local job-market (esl, abe, ged,etc), d)satisfactory attendance at a secondary school leading to a ged. There is a twelve month maximum participation on all of these activities.
5. Work participation, of welfare clients, in states are: (All families) 25% for 1997, 30% for 1998, 35% for 1999, 40% for 2000, 45% for 2001, and 50% by 2002. (Two-Parent Households) 75% for 1997-1998, and 90% for 1999. State who do not meet the participation rates will have their blockgrant reduced.

In addition to the federal portions (which are incorporated in the Pennsylvania plan), there are portions that are specific to Pennsylvania's welfare reform plan and not found in the federal plan, these are:

1. Welfare clients may participate in educational activities after their work requirement hours are fulfilled.
2. Welfare clients will be able to establish "Individual Development Accounts", which they can use to save money for educational activities at approved educational institutions.
3. Welfare to Work program providers can provide four-weeks of remedial education

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Welfare clients represented more than thirty percent of all adult enrollments in Pennsylvania in 1995 (Vocational training news, 5/22/97, p.8). County Assistance Offices do not have a client flowchart to use in determining client participation in educational activities. Pennsylvania's welfare clients are given the opportunity to participate in educational activities based on the Welfare Department's very flexible guidelines and the opinion of the caseworker. Pennsylvania welfare client cases were reviewed by caseworkers involved with general assistance. A client was referred to an "Employment and Training Program" caseworker or not be referred to this kind of caseworker. In either situation, the caseworker developed a "plan of action" for the welfare client. Prior to welfare reform the plan of action may have included some kind of educational activity (eg: english as a second language, adult basic education, general equivalency diploma, higher education, training or something like a single point of contact program for young mothers who need career development skills). Now however, all welfare clients must participate in an eight-week job search program that includes a ninety-day follow-up period, before they are eligible for any other education or taining services. This period of time counts against the client's two-year clock before required twenty hour per week work activity and five-year life-time clock for all wefare benefits.

Individual clients were able to continue through

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different levels and kinds of education and training with only periodic and sporadic review due, in part, to the size of caseloads carried by welfare caseworkers. Welfare clients could receive thousands of dollars of educational and supportive services based on the "plan of action" developed by the caseworker.

Let us look at a specific adult literacy program, in order to see how the "plan of action" hass translated into actual educational services provided to welfare clients.

Northampton Community College's Adult Literacy Department provided educational services to 3527 students in 1995-96, and 40% of those students received some sort of welfare benefit (eg; cash, foodstamps, transportation, daycare, medicaid) or some combination of benefits (NCC,1996). These 3527 students translated into money for the department in terms of state grants, and money for the college in terms of full time equivalents (fte) of students (the measure used for financial reimbursement from the state)

These students participate in programs such as enlish as second language, adult basic education, general equivalency diploma, welfare to work, single point of contact (spoc), and short-term training programs. Welfare reform reform will limit the amount of time that a recipient may participate in an educational activity. The maximum time limit is 12 months in an approved vocational education program. Additionally, welfare reform will limit the kinds of approved educational activities. These limitations will

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certainly have an impact on our Adult Literacy program, and have an impact college-wide in terms of grant dollars, to provide esl, abe, ged, and short or long-term training program and reimbursement for fte's.

A more specific example of welfare's influence Northampton Community Colllege Adult Literacy Department's adult literacy programs will involve our classes that are designed exclusively for welfare clients. An example of this kind of situation are our classes that are twenty hours per week in duration. At this point welfare approves of its clients participating in educational activities that are at least 20 hours per week in duration. So, we offer several kinds of classes that meet this amount of time (eg, esl, abe). However, welfare reform will prevent people from participating in classes of this duration, unless they are involved in a work-related activity for an additional 20 hours per week. Many of our twenty hour per week education classes are over-flowing because recipients know that they need to be involved in some kind of activity for twenty hours per week in order to remain eligible for welfare benefits.

Our adult literacy department has also begun to offer welfare to work programs, that are funded through a collaborative effort between Pennsylvania's Welfare Department, and Labor and Industry. These programs with names like: UpFront, Project Connect, Rapid Attachment, are eight weeks in duration, divided between job preparation (eg resume writing, interviewing skills, etc) and job search (eg,

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working with job developers). These welfare to work programs do not, at this point, provide any literacy training in the eight week period. When these welfare to work programs were initially funded, the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare did not require a literacy component. However, in a revision of the initial plan, the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare has allowed program providers to provide four weeks of remedial education at the discretion of the program provider. The Adult Literacy Department of Northampton Community College has begun to integrate basic education skills into its welfare to work programs. We are adjusting our classes so that the literacy "fit" into the context of the work environment. The range of academic achievement in these welfare to work classes ranges from second grade through college graduates. We use the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess clients in these programs. We have found that the higher the level of basic skills the client has the easier it is for a welfare client to get and retain a job. Individuals are assigned to these programs based on the "plan of action" developed by the Employment and Training caseworker from welfare. Welfare reform will mandate that all clients participate in this kind of eight week job search program prior to receiving any other kind of education or training service. Presuming, of course, that the client did not acquire a job during the eight week job program.

In 1995-96 Northampton Community College's Adult Literacy Department served 3527 students on a $845 thousand

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dollar budget. Only 33% of that budget was strictly literacy funding. The other 67% of the budget came from other sources,(department of welfare,labor and industry, private industry councils, etc) which had other outcomes in mind, but allowed us to implement literacy components into the curriculum (Northampton Community College Adult Literacy Department Annual Report, 1996). We also instituted "world of work" components into existing literacy programs. By showing funding sources that we could be flexible in our program planning and our curriculum (eg." world of work" components), we have been able to make the budget grow, and serve more students. Adult education providers need to begin to look at their current student mix, and their budgets to determine what direction to plan programs.

In the following sections some questions are posed regarding funding, collaborative efforts, program design and delivery, curriculum and staffing. What it means in general to adult education providers, and what we did in the Adult Literacy Department of Northampton Community College.

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Funding

" How does welfare reform influence my program's funding in terms of the number of students who can receive funding from my program?"

Prior to welfare reform it was possible for welfare clients to receive numerous and almost unending educational services. A client may have started in an adult basic education program, moved to a general equivalency diploma

program, and then enrolled in a training program or even college. It was not uncommon to see welfare clients with numerous training program diplomas. This was financially beneficial to the programs and institutions who received funding to provide these programs. The client did not benefit, other than to get more and more training that was not being applied to the world of work and to learn how to "work" the the welfare system.

Welfare reform has stopped this training and funding merry-go-round, by limiting the amount of time training would be available to clients and the kind of training that would be acceptable for clients.

The Adult Literacy Department of Northampton Community College has attempted to meet this new challenge by searching out funding from new sources. We have searched out funding from private industry councils, the Department of Labor and Industry, and the Department of Public Welfare. We have also searched out partners in irdustry to provider customized job training (cjt), and short-term training programs. These new funding sources, Along with traditional funding from the Department of Education has helped our department's funding remain constant.

Collaboration

a) "Is my organization capable of dealing with the accountability requirements of a non-educational funding source?"
b) " What kind of collaborative efforts can I pursue, in order for people to receive my programs educational services once they are employed (eg, work-force literacy,

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etc)?"

c) "What kind of collaborative efforts already exist at the state-level (eg, education,labor and industry, and welfare) and local-level (among providers of social services and educational providers)?"

The issue of collaboration is, in my belief, going to be the major factor that will separate successful and thriving providers of adult education services from those who merely survive or perhaps do not survive. Let address each question individually, and how our adult literacy department has responded.

a) An education organization that does want to submit proposals for other money will have to be willing to accept the policies and procedures of the funding source. What indicates success to one funding source may not be the measure of success for another funding source. What indicates success for a welfare to work program may not be the measure of success for a literacy program.

We have decided that it was in the best interest of the department and the college to pursue funding from sources along with education.

In our adult literacy department we are monitored by the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Industry, The Department of Public Welfare, local Private Industry Councils. Each of these organizations has a programmatic monitor who looks at program procedures and outcomes, and a financial monitor who looks at the fiscal portion of the program.

b) Organizations attempting to develop a collaborative

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relationship must have a framework in place that: a) examines the partner's delivery system, goals and objectives, values, and programmatic requirements, and b) re-evaluate how they currently do business and what it will mean to do business together.

Northampton Community College's Adult Literacy Department is institutional-based, but the mission of the department is community outreach. As such, we pursue collaborative arrangements with many community-based organizations in order to provide our programs to people. We work collaboratively with churches, social service organizations, shelters, prisons, and private industry.

c) Collaborative efforts across agencys at the state-level are relative new. Where the efforts are similar (eg: Labor and Industry and Department of Public Welfare) the likeiehood of collaboration with resultant funding is more likely. However, as mentioned earlier, in the area of welfare reform where education and welfare should be working together it is not occurring. We have tried to incorporate portions of various programs into models program development and delivery. The Pennsylvania Departments of Education(post-secondary and higher education), Public Welfare, Labor and Industry and the Govenor's Office Workforce Development have just begun tc collaborate on a general plan of action (What's the

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Buzz,vol.16,#5,6/97).

Program Design and Delivery

"What kind of program model will be acceptable to funding sources that combine training, education, and work?"

Educators tend to think of classes with specific beginning and end dates (eg; course, term, semester, cycle). In the case of welfare to work programs, and other classes with varied funding sources, its better to think in some other framework.

Our department uses a modified open entry/open exit program model, which along with our compentency-based curriculum allows students to move through programs at their own rate. It is satisfactory with he funding sources yhat we are dealing with because it is efficient and cost effective.

Curriculum Design and Staffing

a) " Is it possible for my organization to incorporate "world of work" components in existing literacy programs, in order to ease the transition to other sources of funding"
b) "Does my organization want to pursue non-educational funding in order to preserve current staffing levels and service delivery levels?"

a) Our department has developed curricular models which use competencies. We have instituted "world of Work" components into all of our programs. The component uses contextual integration of "world of work" material into our literacy programs, and literacy components into the

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welfare to work programs. For example, a training program for day care workers who need literacy remediation would get literacy components geared specifically to the day care industry.

Our compentency-based curriculums allow us to have individuals proceed at ther own pace, assisted by individualized instruction based on the students assessment test result.

b) We have pursued funding from various sources in order to maintain existing staffing levels. However, the new kinds of programs, with different kinds of outcomes expected, has caused us to reconsider what is an appropriate educational background (eg; counseling degrees versus education degrees) for our instructors.

Conclusions

In fiscal year 1994 59% of the welfare recipients, in the United States, were involved in some kind of educational or training activity. Participation on a state-level varied from 24% to 85% of the welfare population (PA Welfare, 1996). The largest portion of welfare clients receiving adult education services were in adult basic education programs (eg esl, abe), with the next largest percentage receiving higher education services. It is estimated that fifty percent of the four million welfare recipients in the country do not have a high school diploma or a ged (The Buzz, 1997). It is estimated that welfare reform will eliminate about 300,000 welfare recipients from educational programs, across the

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United States. Welfare reform will dramatically limit the kind and duration of educational services welfare recipients will be able to receive, which in turn will impact adult education program providers who count welfare recipients among their students.

Program providers need to begin, if they already have not, to re-evaluate every aspect of programs that are offered, such as issues mentions above. Flexibility is the name of the game. The more flexible the organization is when looking for new funding sources, and implementing non-literacy components into existing programs, the easier it will be for the organization to continue to thrive.

This could be an exciting time because of all the new alliances that can be formed among providers and funding sources. Also, it can be an exciting time, in terms of program design, and delivery. Adult education program providers who are not flexible in program planning, in terms of collaborative efforts, and instituting "world of work" components into existing literacy programs will have to battle with those providers who are willing to meet the coming changes with their own creativity.

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